

***In the Claims:***

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-38 (canceled)

39. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 38,~~ A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:

- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;
- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole; and
- (d) securing said pin in said hole,

wherein said pin is a locking pin having a male component and a female component such that said securing said pin of said step (d) comprises inserting said male component into said female component.

claim 40 (Canceled)

41. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 40,~~ A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:

- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;
- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole; and
- (d) securing said pin in said hole,

wherein said pin is a roll pin and said step (d) comprises inserting a first fastener in a first end of said hole and inserting a second fastener in a second end of said hole.

42. (Original) The method according to claim 41, wherein said fastener is selected from the group consisting of threaded cap screws, rivets, grommets, and washers.

43. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 38,~~ A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:

- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;

- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole; and
- (d) securing said pin in said hole,

wherein said step (d) comprises tack welding at least one end of said pin.

44. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 38, further comprising the step of:~~

A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:

- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;
- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole;
- (d) securing said pin in said hole; and
- (e) fitting an exterior sleeve over the bat, said exterior sleeve being an elongated tube having a top opening and a bottom opening, such that said top opening is in contact with said wood barrel portion of the bat and said bottom opening is in contact with said metal handle portion of the bat.

45. (Original) The method according to claim 44, wherein said step (e) fits said exterior sleeve over the bat such that said seam is about centered in said exterior sleeve.
46. (Original) The method according to claim 44, wherein an interior surface of said exterior sleeve approximates the exterior surface of the bat at said seam.
47. (Original) The method according to claim 46, wherein said interior surface is generally hour-glass shaped.
48. (Original) The method according to claim 44, wherein said exterior sleeve is made of a hard rubber.
49. (Original) The method according to claim 44, wherein said exterior sleeve has a length within the range of about 1.5 inches to about 3.5 inches.
50. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~claim 38~~ claim 53, wherein said wood barrel portion has a transition between said hitting portion and said fitting portion, said transition being a smooth and gradual taper.

51. (Original) The method according to claim 50, wherein said transition is about a 45 degree slope.
52. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~claim 38~~ claim 53, wherein said pin has a length equal to about a length of said hole.
53. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 38, A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:~~
- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;
- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat, wherein said hole is in proximity to said seam;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole; and
- (d) securing said pin in said hole.

54. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 38, further comprising the step of:~~

A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:

- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;
- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole;
- (d) securing said pin in said hole; and
- (e) positioning an interior sleeve over said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion prior to said step (a) such that said fitting portion with said interior sleeve are inserted within said barrel receiving portion of said metal handle portion.

55. (Original) The method according to claim 54, wherein said interior sleeve is a material selected from the group consisting of about 40 durometer gum rubber and tacky gum rubber.

56. (Original) The method according to claim 54, wherein said interior sleeve is an elongated tapered tube having a length about equal to a length of said fitting portion of said wooden barrel portion.

57. (Original) The method according to claim 54 wherein said top opening of said interior sleeve is slightly below said seam

58. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 38,~~ A method for manufacturing a bat, comprising the steps of:

- (a) inserting a fitting portion of a wood barrel portion into a barrel receiving end of a metal handle portion, thereby creating a seam between said wood barrel portion and said metal handle portion of the bat;
- (b) boring a hole through said metal handle portion and said fitting portion of said wood barrel portion, said hole being traverse to a longitudinal axis of the bat and wherein said step (b) bores said hole about one half an inch below said seam;
- (c) inserting a pin into said hole; and
- (d) securing said pin in said hole.

59. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~claim 38~~ claim 58, wherein said metal handle portion is hollow.

claim 60 (Canceled)

61. (New) The method according to claim 58, wherein said wood barrel portion has a transition between said hitting portion and said fitting portion, said transition being a smooth and gradual taper.
62. (New) The method according to claim 63, wherein said transition is about a 45 degree slope.
63. (New) The method according to claim 58, wherein said pin has a length equal to about a length of said hole.
64. (New) The method according to claim 58, wherein said pin is selected from the group consisting of: a roll pin, a locking pin, and a locking pin having a male component and a female component.
65. (New) The method according to claim 53, wherein said metal handle portion is hollow.
66. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein said pin is selected from the group consisting of: a roll pin, a locking pin, and a locking pin having a male component and a female component.